

VZCZCXRO0211
PP RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHLG #0274 1411640
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 211640Z MAY 09
FM AMEMBASSY LILONGWE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0508
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 1016
RUEHBZ/AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE PRIORITY 0041
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0359
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS LILONGWE 000274

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

LONDON FOR AF WATCHER PETER LORD
ADDIS ABABA FOR AU

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [MI](#)
SUBJECT: MUTHARIKA HEADED FOR BIG WIN

REF: LILONGWE 273

11. (SBU) Summary: As of 5pm on May 21, incumbent President Bingu wa Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) had a comfortable lead in the presidential election. The Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) has certified 41 percent of the polling stations' results, with Mutharika surpassing Malawi Congress Party (MCP) President John Tembo almost two to one. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) privately told US officials Thursday that their numbers show Mutharika with approximately 65 percent of the vote and Tembo 31 percent. The MEC hopes to finalize official results by late on May 21, just in time for the scheduled May 22 inauguration. Former President Muluzi publicly acknowledged Mutharika's victory, while Tembo is still equivocating. End summary.

12. (SBU) As of 5pm on May 21, incumbent President Bingu wa Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) had a comfortable lead in the presidential election. The Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) has certified 41 percent of the polling stations' results, with Mutharika surpassing Malawi Congress Party (MCP) President John Tembo almost two to one. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) privately told US officials Thursday that their numbers show Mutharika with approximately 65 percent of the vote and Tembo 31 percent. NDI is working with the Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN) in a joint monitoring effort funded by the USG. MESN will make a public announcement only after an official proclamation by the MEC, which is expected late on May 21 or the next morning. Preliminary and anecdotal evidence indicate that Mutharika's DPP has also won a parliamentary majority.

13. (U) Statements by foreign observer missions generally applauded the election, with SADC terming the polling "credible, peaceful and free." Along with SADC, the EU and Commonwealth observer teams also noted shortcomings, including the belated release of the voter rolls, media bias, and Mutharika's use of state resources. The Commonwealth statement noted that key benchmarks for democratic elections were not fully met.

14. (U) United Democratic Front (UDF) leader Bakili Muluzi, who joined Tembo in a last minute coalition, publicly acknowledged the win by President Mutharika and personally congratulated him. Tembo later distanced himself from Muluzi's statement. Tembo lodged a complaint with the MEC, claiming irregularities such as delivery of ballots in open envelopes. However, he suggested that he would accept the results if the MEC addresses his complaints. The MEC has not

yet acted on Tembo's complaint.

15. (U) COMMENT: Mutharika's margin of victory has surprised everyone, even the ruling party. Mutharika made unexpected inroads into MCP's stronghold in the central region and also swept constituencies in the north. Tembo's loss also spells the end of regional loyalties that have dominated Malawi's politics since the establishment of democracy in 1994. The DPP's potentially sizable majority in Parliament will give it a free hand for the next five years.

BODDE